REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 12th JANUARY

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL.

"Happy New Year to you all. I hope you all had a great time with your family and friends, over the festive season. I am sat reflecting on what challenges lie ahead this year? The more I think about this the longer the list gets. It is certainly not an easy time to be a County Councillor knowing that every decision directly affects the people of Cambridgeshire especially as most decisions seem to involve spending less money.

Boiling all the issues down it seems that we have four key variables. How many services we provide, how many people we provide them to, the cost of the services and how much money we have to spend. Altering any of those variables brings a host of issues both to the individuals and politically. Let me share some challenges, in no particular order, and certainly not a full list:

Finance
We continue to face reducing central government cash allocations coupled with unprecedented increases in demand for our services. Our county had a 12.4% increase in population over the last census period, the fastest growth in the country.

So, we have two problems. Firstly, just like all local authorities we must absorb the central government cash reductions in providing the current level of services. But, where we are different, we must also work out how we are to support the huge additional demand placed on us because of growth. The problem for us is that central government understands the first issue but not necessarily the second. This means that often policies designed to stimulate regeneration in northern cities cut across our need to sustain growth.

Council tax is set locally, to meet local demands. Central government appears to want to take this local responsibility and accountability away. We are a low tax county council but are facing a huge and increasing demand on our services. Without the correct level of funding we will have no choice but to direct our money to statutory services only and abandon supporting
economic growth. This seems to be wrong at a time when the country needs growth.

Social care
This is a subject that keeps me awake at night. We have a growing number of children being born and a growing elderly population. I have already pointed out we have less money. I am determined we will protect the elderly, the young and the infirm but the question is how. I will seek to stand up for those that need us most because they need a strong voice to be heard. But this is not pretty. We may need to raise additional cash to ensure we can continue to act as the organisation of last resort."

Yours, John Reynolds, Cambridgeshire County Councilor.

GUIDED BUSWAY TO GET EXTRA SECURITY

The Guided Busway Operations team have made a successful bid for funding to provide extra security. The awarded to the County Council to provide extra security for those passengers wishing to use the Busway and park their bikes safely at the cycle racks provided along the route.

Extra CCTV cameras will be installed covering the cycle racks at Histon, Oakington, Longstanton and Swavesey. This type of security will greatly assist the police in dealing with any future incidents of theft in these areas and will hopefully encourage more cycle users to use the busway and its cycle facilities.

HIGHWAY CHIEFS WELCOME CASH BOOST FOR ROAD MAINTENANCE

Cambridgeshire have welcomed a government cash boost for highway maintenance which will see further improvements to the road network across the county. Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin has announced a £215 million cash injection for highway maintenance across the country with Cambridgeshire set to receive nearly £2 million in 2013 with a further £1m in 2014. The government cash follows an earlier County Council decision to create a £90m repair pot which has already been set aside for highway improvements in Cambridgeshire over the next five years.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Maintaining and improving the highway infrastructure in Cambridgeshire is one of the County Council's priorities and this government cash will help us meet the cost of keeping the roads in good condition across the county. Some of Cambridgeshire's roads - such as those on fenland soil and running alongside waterways - have particular problems which are difficult and complex and therefore very expensive, to rectify, but the maintenance fund is also used for improvements such as road resurfacing, repair of bridges and repairing damage to the highways caused by severe weather and flooding."

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CLOCK IS TICKING DOWN TO THE CREATION OF HEALTHWATCH IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Work is progressing to create a new health and social care watchdog which will help inform and improve health and social care services in Cambridgeshire.

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire will be part of a new national Healthwatch network from April 2013, giving people a powerful voice locally and nationally. Locally the County Council has been working to create the local link in the national chain of Healthwatch groups.

Through the network, Healthwatch England will make sure the voices of all people not just those use health and social care services are heard by the Secretary of State for Health, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the NHS Commissioning Board, Monitor and every local authority in England.

Local Healthwatch organisations will:

* have the power to enter and view services.
* influence how services are set up and commissioned by having a seat on the local health and wellbeing board.
* produce reports which influence the way services are designed and delivered.
* provide information, advice and support about local services.
* pass information and recommendations to Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission.
* act as an independent advocate for people who wish to complain about services.

Recruitment to key positions within Cambridgeshire Healthwatch has started and details of the vacancies can be found on the Cambridgeshire County Council website at: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

"These local Healthwatch organisations will involve diverse people of all ages. They will build on the experience of Local Involvement Networks (LINks), so ensuring continuity, and will be advocates and champions for all, giving voice to whole community. With a permanent seat on the Cambridgeshire Health And Wellbeing Board they will be a fiercely independent watchdog with real power to influence and affect change for the better."

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NEW YEAR, NEW YOU - BECOME A FOSTER CARER

Cambridgeshire County Council has launched a campaign to urge those planning a change of career in 2013 to consider becoming a foster carer.

Fostering is a big commitment which involves offering a child space in your home, and in your life. Potential foster carers need to have the time, skills and experience to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people.

Cambridgeshire County Council recognises this commitment and offers carers a comprehensive support package. Maintenance allowances are paid based on the age of the children and young people placed with our carers, and carers who develop their skills and knowledge by continued professional development receive additional Skills Levels Payments. Carers can also work towards professional qualifications.

Many foster carers earn up to £18,500 per year for each child in their care.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Our foster carers play a key role in transforming lives and they make a huge difference to children and young people. We need to recruit more carers in Cambridgeshire and urge people who want a new challenge in 2013 to come forward and find out more about fostering."

The fostering service welcomes enquiries from people aged 21 and over who have a spare room in their home and, in particular, from those who already have experience working with children and young people or who have worked in other caring professions.

WINTER WEATHER WARNING - BUT HELP IS AT HAND

With weather experts predicting that temperatures will plunge next week, vulnerable people are being reminded that extra support is available to help them stay warm and well in their own homes. A consortium of organisations from across Cambridgeshire led by the County Council recently won more than £250,000 from the Government's Warm Homes Healthy People fund.

The money is being used to commission additional services which will enhance what was already provided by agencies across Cambridgeshire - the extra help includes advice services, healthy living initiatives, household and heating repairs and improvements and community support initiatives such as shopping services.

Referrals for the support can be made by any of the agencies working with vulnerable people including GPs, health providers, housing associations, local authorities, charities and advice providers, neighbours, carers or individuals. Work is targeted at individuals and families which are most at risk when cold weather hits.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "For the second year running agencies across Cambridgeshire have come together to successfully bid for this extra government funding. I would like to remind vulnerable people that additional help is now available to keep them safe, warm and well this winter and urge them to make contact to see what extra support or services could be provided to them."

CHRISTMAS PRESENT UNWRAPPED FOR PARK & RIDE USERS

Commuters have been given a boost with the completion of an extension to the popular Babraham Road Park & Ride site in Cambridge. Babraham Road is the most used of all the Cambridge Park & Ride sites and users now benefit from an extra 500 car parking spaces and 80 sheltered cycle parking spaces. The construction, by Cambridgeshire County Council, included widening of the exit road, construction of an alternative drop off point,

installing lighting and CCTV cameras. The £1.6million scheme was funded from developers whose building projects will impact on this local area. It is also one of the measures under the Better Bus Area Fund (BBAF) which aim to help improve bus journeys, make it easier for passengers to access services and reduce pollution in the historic Cambridge city.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The Cambridge Park & Ride is an award-winning system with almost four million trips made each year. The extension to Babraham Road Park & Ride has added much needed capacity to ensure the site has spaces available. With a direct link to Addenbrooke's Hospital and Cambridge Railway Station, the Babraham Road Park & Ride provides an excellent alternative for passengers wishing to access both these areas and the city itself."

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THE BETTER BUS AREA FUND (BBAF)

The BBAF programme focuses on improving bus facilities in the core area of Cambridge City Centre and on four of the radial routes that are heavily used by buses (Hills Road, Milton Road, Histon Road and Mill Road). It also focuses on outer radial routes from the Trumpington P&R site and the villages of Sawston, Cambourne, and Linton.

Cambridgeshire County Council was awarded £1.724million by the DfT's BBAF in March 2012 to spend over the next two years. The BBAF was established to promote improved and integrated public transport services that support economic growth and reduce reliance on the car.

The bid was prepared in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Stagecoach East and Whippet Coaches Ltd.

The BBAF programme is based on three key elements:

* Bus priority and traffic management measures, such as buses prioritised through signalised junctions and rod space reallocated to buses.
* Facilities and interchange improvements, such as improved bus stops, dedicated interchange points and upgraded vehicles.
* Targeted information and ticketing improvements, such as Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) improvements and smart-card top-up machines.

The project aims to:

* Improve journey times and reliability to increase bus patronage
* Reduce congestion, carbon emissions and improve air quality
* Improve access to employment

PUBLIC HELP CAMBRIDGESHIRE LIBRARY SERVICE JOIN THE IT CROWD

In the New Year residents will start to benefit from free Wi-Fi in Cambridgeshire Libraries and updated public computers, to help them seek jobs, access services and stay in touch. Earlier this year, customers were asked for their views on the current IT provision in their local library. Coupled with feedback often received by staff in libraries, it was clear that the public felt the computers could be improved to make it easier for them to access web based services.

A free Wi-Fi network will be installed in phases across Cambridgeshire Libraries, whilst public computers will be upgraded to enable a better service that supports modern software.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Our library computers are regularly used for a wide range of things from job hunting, to resources for homework and to keeping in touch with friends and family. We've known for some time that the majority of them needed upgrading and Wi-Fi is regularly requested. We're now making this investment as part of plans to create a 21st Century Library Service.

"This in turn helps to support the Governments Digital by Default initiative - by helping to provide internet access to those who may not have it at home, or who feel unsure how to use it."

SOHAM RAILWAY STATION CLOSER THAN EVER BEFORE

With a new station proposal included in Network Rail's Business Plan for 2014-19, Soham is a step forward to regaining its status as railway town. Both Cambridgeshire County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council have been working closely with Network Rail over the past two years to build the case for re-opening the station at Soham.

The station - a key element of the Soham Masterplan - would support the town's growing population and help attract new jobs to the area and provide a direct rail link to Ely and Cambridge.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: “We are very encouraged to hear Network Rail have included a railway station at Soham as part of their new business plan. It is obviously still early in this process and there is more work to do but we are cautiously optimistic.

“The next stage in the process is to put together a business case to show how any service stopping in Soham would be used and how many people would use it. We are also pleased to see many of our aspirations for the rail network included in the Business Plan. This includes reference to the proposed Cambridge Science Park Station as well as improvements to the rail network that would increase the speed and frequency of services to London and Norwich.”

Councillor Peter Moakes, Leader at East Cambridgeshire District Council, said: “This announcement is a direct result of the work we have been doing with our partners for the benefit of Soham. Whilst a new station is not yet committed, this is a significant step towards seeing train services stopping at Soham. Over the coming months we will continue to work with Network Rail and the Department for Transport to take forward plans for Soham railway station. I would stress this is not a done deal but we should all be very positive about the direction Network Rail are taking.”

NEW YEAR NEW YOU WITH HELP FROM CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

People looking to try something new in 2013 as part of their new year resolution can with the help of Cambridgeshire County Council's - New Year, New You - campaign.

The County Council wants to help more people access their services, learn new skills or find out more about the authority.

The campaign will feature a number of Council service related ideas and suggestions for residents to try. It could range from trying a new adult learning course to signing up to be a library member for the very first time. Or perhaps residents would like to find a new hobby - in which case they could pop along to Grafham Water and see what's on offer.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "We wanted to give our residents something different to think about when they're contemplating their new year’s resolutions. Residents may be surprised at the range of services that the Council provides and this could be a chance to get involved with something new."

A range of Cambridgeshire County Council services and activities will be featured throughout January, visit

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DIRECTOR BANNED FROM ACTING AS ESTATE AGENT

Sharon Price, the Director of Huntingdon-based Price Property Rentals Ltd has been banned by the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) from ever engaging in estate agency work again.

The ban follows a prosecution in June 2011 by Cambridgeshire County Council Trading Standards in which Price was fined £6,000, ordered to pay £2,000 court costs and disqualified from acting as Director of a company for the maximum 5 years.

The court heard from prosecutor Mike McGee that landlords, tenants and contractors were left out of pocket by Price" such was the chaotic and shambolic way that the company was mismanaged".

Sixty percent of claims made by landlords and tenants to the National Association of Estate Agents were able to be settled - with a total value of £94,000. However, Cambridgeshire Trading Standards referred the case to the OFT with the intention of preventing further harm to other legitimate businesses and consumers. As a result Sharon Price now faces a lifetime ban from working as an estate agent.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Whilst the court recognised Sharon Price's misdemeanours when they fined her during the Trading Standards prosecution of June 2011, it was important to ensure that Price could not be allowed to commit similar offences in the future. Trading Standards has a role to help

protect legitimate and well run businesses as well as consumers, from being harmed by traders such as this. We welcome the OFT's ban on Sharon Price ever being involved in estate agency work again."

Mike Coates, Assistant Director in the OFT's Goods and Consumer Group said "Estate agents must treat their clients and contractors they employ fairly and people renting, selling and buying properties need to know that the estate agent is honest and trustworthy. The OFT, working together with the Trading Standards Service, will continue to take tough action against estate agents who flout the law."

WASTE RECYCLING & MECHANICAL BIOLOGICAL TREATMENT (MBT) UPDATE

The normal very successful recycling of the green and blue waste will continue in the same format as it has done over many years. The Council continues to encourage all residents to reduce and recycle waste. Cambridgeshire remains at the very top of recycling performers in the Country.

Amey Cespa, who own and run the Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) plant, are experiencing a problem with their contractor who built the MBT plant. They are working with their contractor to deliver the plant to the required specification. The problem that Amey Cespa have impacts only on the grey bin and trade waste. The contract the County Council has with Amey Cespa compensates the County Council in full for any failure to perform to specification, no costs fall on the council tax payer.

Visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/

If I can help with any issues please contact me County Councillor John Reynolds at; 4 Hollytrees, Bar Hill, CB23 8SF - Tel 01954 200571 – email john.reynolds@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS
JANUARY 14th 2013

GUIDE DOG PUPPY GUS SAY'S GOODBYE

I have had a very exciting time these last few months, first we went to stay in a Hotel near Shrewsbury there was a nice garden for me to play in I think I was very good as they had some lovely red and yellow flowers which looked fun to play with but Grandma said leave it so I went and dug a hole in the lawn instead, it was only a little hole but Grandma was cross. You can't please some people. We had some lovely outing, one day we walked over a very high aqueduct with boats cruising over it. We walked along a path with high railing it was a very long way down to the ground so I was glad Granddad kept a tight hold on my lead. We saw lots of funny sheep who had strange voices, they all looked the same to me so I don't know how they managed to find their own family, when I gave a little hallo bark they all ran away which was not at all friendly, I was quite hurt that they did not like me. The hotel was lovely I enjoyed sharing a room with Grandma and granddad because at home I have to sleep in the kitchen by myself.

I have had lots of puppy classes which are quite hard work as I have gone up to the big puppy's class but my supervisor said I work very well. Often after class several of us go out for lunch all us pups amaze people because we all lie quietly under the table and do not mess around at all. The restaurant lady said she wished some children behaved as well as we do, I know what she means because there was a little boy screaming and throwing his food around, I think his mum should have taken away his food and put him outside till he behaved, we pups were very glad when his family went out.

I had a lovely Christmas we went to Cleethorpes to stay with Aunty Debbie and her toy poodle Bridie. Bridie is still very bossy but I have learnt to walk as far away as I can in the house so she cannot nip my nose. Outside though we have great fun running together especially when we go on the beach, Bridie is nearly 9 but she can still run very fast, we also found lots of other dogs to play with I especially liked the big long haired German Shepherd who could run very fast. I saw some big odd looking animals on the beach one made a strange heehaw noise Grandma said they were called donkeys poor things had to carry children on their backs and were not allowed to play I am jolly glad I am a dog. I loved running in the sea then rubbing my fur on the sand to dry it, sea water tastes awful and so did the dead star fish I ate but you have to try things first to see if they are tasty.

On Boxing Day we went to Aunty Sarah's in Leeds, there were 4 dogs me Bridie and 2 whippets, 4 children and 7 grownups so it was noisy and great fun. I specially loved Scarlett Grandma's youngest grandchild who loved me and played with me all day she even lay on the floor with me to give me a cuddle and cried when I had to go. Everyone said I was very well behaved Grandma and Granddad were very pleased with me but Bridie was naughty and had to stay on her lead all day.

We did not stay up to see the New Year in but I got Granddad up because there were some loud bangs and funny flashes I did not know what they were Granddad said they were fireworks and nothing to worry about, he closed the blinds and gave me a special treat then I went straight back to sleep again.

Sunday January 6th is the day I left Home to go for training but first I went to stay for two days with my supervisor because Grandma was going on Monday to train for a week with her own hearing dog. Then on Tuesday morning Rowena my supervisor and I went to fetch my friend Barley who was going into training with me and we all drove to the training school in London. I was sad to leave all the people I know in Bar Hill but I am going to try to be a very good guide dog. I hope I am like Vania Grandma's last dog who is working with a young man of 17, he has always been blind and his mum said it is wonderful to see him and Vania going out by themselves. He sent a Christmas card with pictures of Vania and said he loves her and she hardly ever leaves his side.

GOODBYE EVERYONE LOVE FROM GUS